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Cyclops. Storm. Nightcrawler. Wolverine. Colossus. Children of the atom, students of Charles Xavier, MUTANTS — feared and hated by the world they have sworn to protect. These are the STRANGEST heroes of all!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE UNCANNY X-MEN!™

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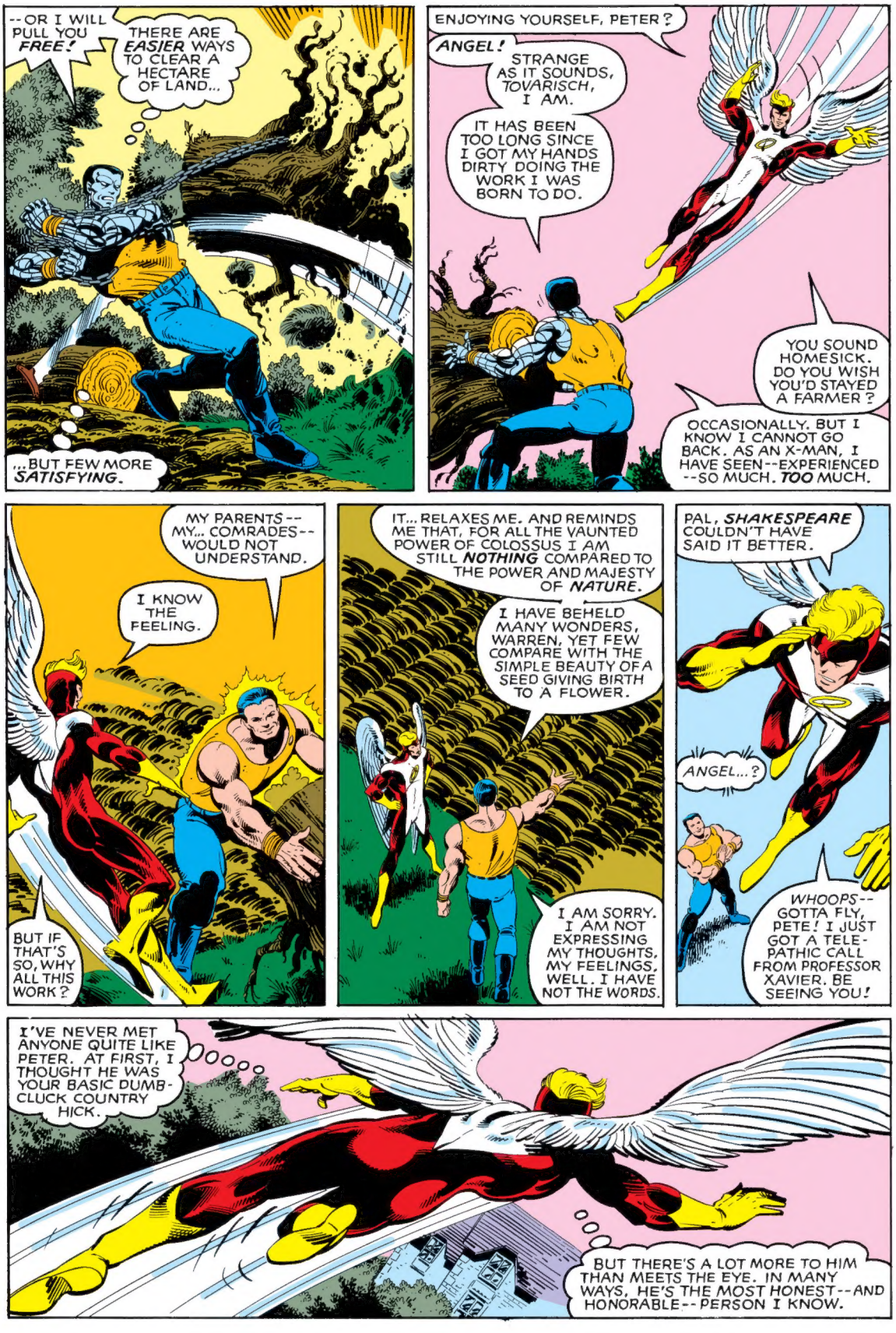
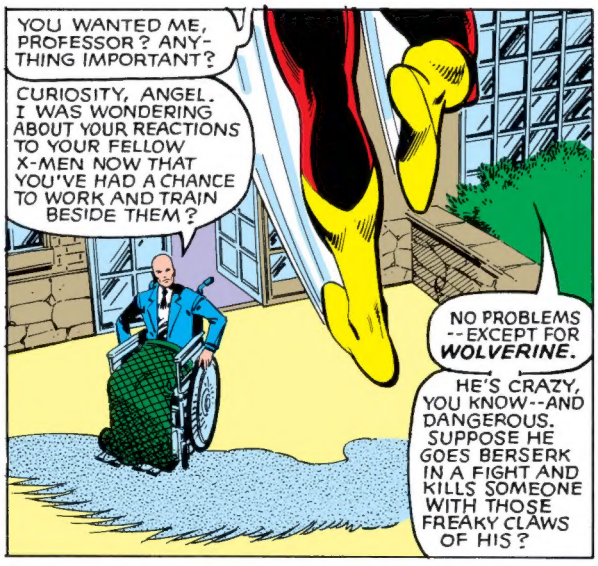
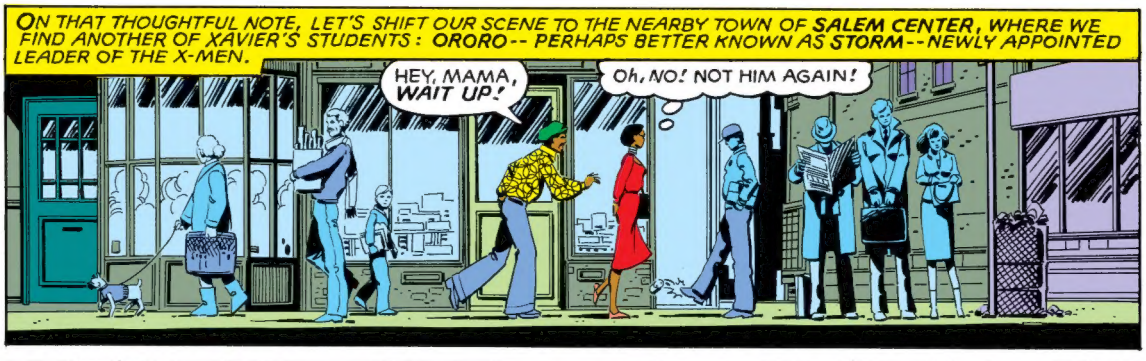

--OR I WILL PULL YOU FREE!
THERE ARE EASIER WAYS TO CLEAR A HECTARE OF LAND...
...BUT FEW MORE SATISFYING.
ENJOYING YOURSELF, PETER?
ANGEL!
STRANGE AS IT SOUNDS, TOVARISCH, I AM.
IT HAS BEEN TOO LONG SINCE I GOT MY HANDS DIRTY DOING THE WORK I WAS BORN TO DO.
YOU SOUND HOMESICK. DO YOU WISH YOU'D STAYED A FARMER?
OCCASIONALLY. BUT I KNOW I CANNOT GO BACK. AS AN X-MAN, I HAVE SEEN--EXPERIENCED --SO MUCH. TOO MUCH.
MY PARENTS-- MY... COMRADES-- WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND.
I KNOW THE FEELING.
BUT IF THAT'S SO, WHY ALL THIS WORK?
IT... RELAXES ME. AND REMINDS ME THAT, FOR ALL THE VAUNTED POWER OF COLOSSUS I AM STILL NOTHING COMPARED TO THE POWER AND MAJESTY OF NATURE.
I HAVE BEHELD MANY WONDERS, WARREN, YET FEW COMPARE WITH THE SIMPLE BEAUTY OF A SEED GIVING BIRTH TO A FLOWER.
I AM SORRY. I AM NOT EXPRESSING MY THOUGHTS, MY FEELINGS, WELL. I HAVE NOT THE WORDS.
PAL, SHAKESPEARE COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT BETTER.
ANGEL...?
WHOOPS-- GOTTA FLY, PETE! I JUST GOT A TELE-PATHIC CALL FROM PROFESSOR XAVIER. BE SEEING YOU!
I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE QUITE LIKE PETER. AT FIRST, I THOUGHT HE WAS YOUR BASIC DUMB-CLUCK COUNTRY HICK.
BUT THERE'S A LOT MORE TO HIM THAN MEETS THE EYE. IN MANY WAYS, HE'S THE MOST HONEST--AND HONORABLE--PERSON I KNOW.


YOU WANTED ME, PROFESSOR? ANYTHING IMPORTANT?
CURIOSITY, ANGEL. I WAS WONDERING ABOUT YOUR REACTIONS TO YOUR FELLOW X-MEN NOW THAT YOU'VE HAD A CHANCE TO WORK AND TRAIN BESIDE THEM?
NO PROBLEMS --EXCEPT FOR WOLVERINE.
HE'S CRAZY, YOU KNOW--AND DANGEROUS. SUPPOSE HE GOES BERSERK IN A FIGHT AND KILLS SOMEONE WITH THOSE FREAKY CLAWS OF HIS?

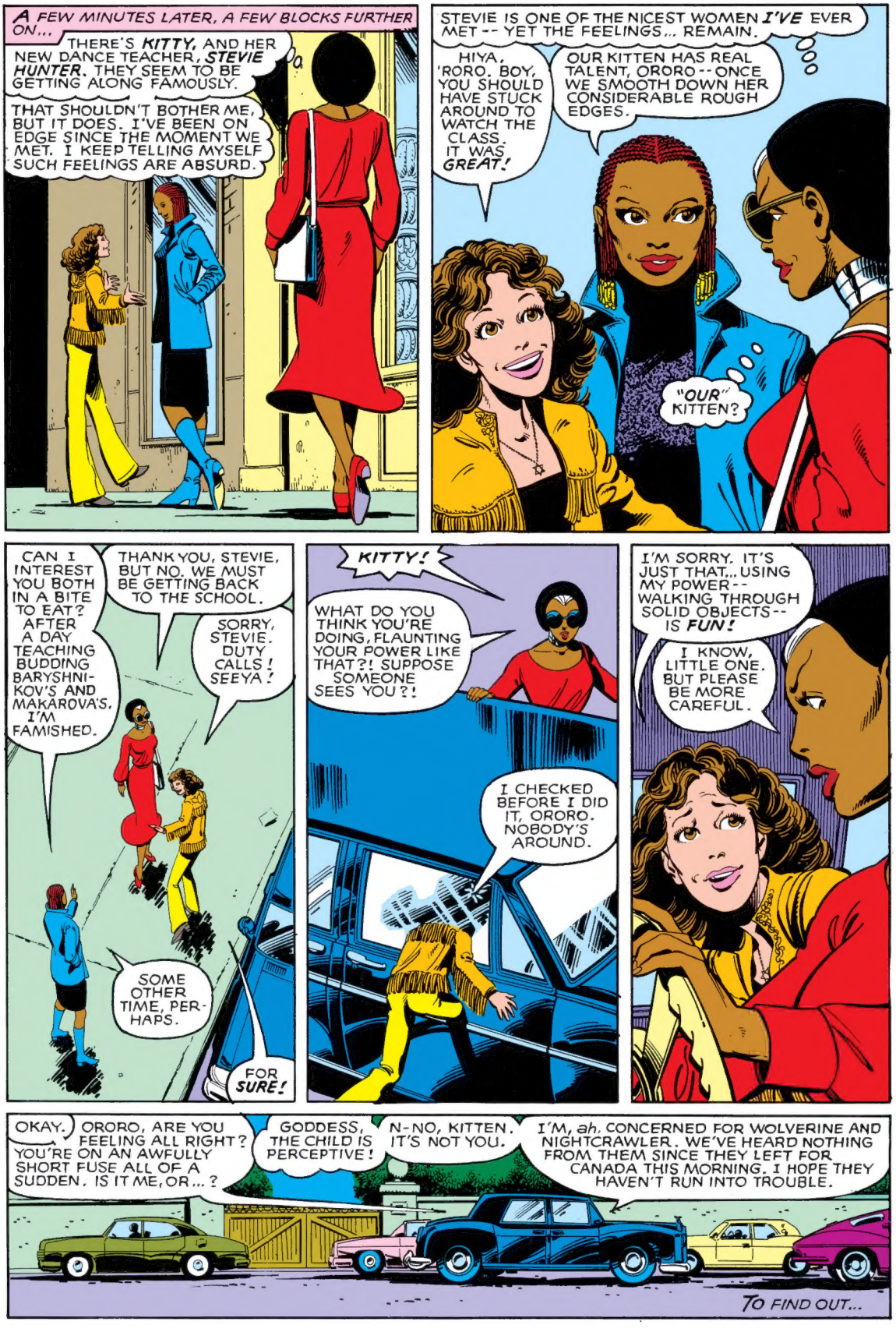
I KNEW THAT WHEN I INVITED HIM TO JOIN THE X-MEN, WARREN. HE HAS FAULTS. YET FOR ALL OF THAT, HE IS A GOOD MAN. HIS POTENTIAL -- AS A LEADER, AS A SUPER-HERO -- IS EXTRAORDINARY.
ALL MY ADULT LIFE, I'VE TRIED TO HELP MUTANTS COME TO TERMS WITH THEMSELVES, AND THE SOCIETY AROUND THEM--
--TO TEACH HOMO SAPIENS AND HOMO SUPERIOR TO LIVE TOGETHER IN PEACE AND HARMONY. FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THAT INCLUDES WOLVERINE. I MAY FAIL, BUT I MUST AT LEAST MAKE THE ATTEMPT.


ON THAT THOUGHTFUL NOTE, LET'S SHIFT OUR SCENE TO THE NEARBY TOWN OF SALEM CENTER, WHERE WE FIND ANOTHER OF XAVIER'S STUDENTS: ORORO -- PERHAPS BETTER KNOWN AS STORM -- NEWLY APPOINTED LEADER OF THE X-MEN.
HEY, MAMA, WAIT UP!
Oh, NO! NOT HIM AGAIN!

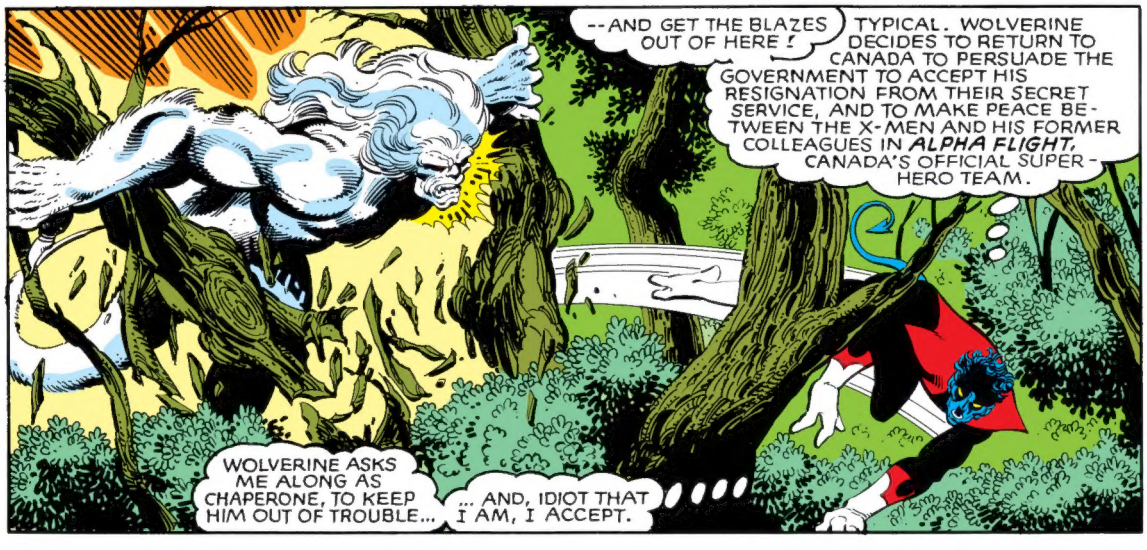
I BEG YOUR PARDON?
SWEET THING, I AM ONE FINE DUDE, YOU ARE ONE FINE FOX. THIS IS ONE FINE NIGHT. WHAT SAY WE MAKE BEAUTIFUL MUSIC TOGETHER...
... AT STUDIO ONE, THE HOTTEST DISCO IN NEW YORK?

NOW, AS BEFORE, I THINK NOT.
WHY WON'T YOU TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER?
'CAUSE I'M IN LOVE! WITH YOU, DARLIN'--
HEY!!

I'M SOAKIN' WET! WHERE'D THAT STORM COME FROM?!
Oh, CALL IT... MAGIC.
SHE SMILES...
... AND, AS CASUALLY AS SHE CREATED THE MINIATURE THUNDERSHOWER, STORM MAKES IT GO AWAY.


A FEW MINUTES LATER, A FEW BLOCKS FURTHER ON...
THERE'S KITTY, AND HER NEW DANCE TEACHER, STEVIE HUNTER. THEY SEEM TO BE GETTING ALONG FAMOUSLY.
THAT SHOULDN'T BOTHER ME, BUT IT DOES. I'VE BEEN ON EDGE SINCE THE MOMENT WE MET. I KEEP TELLING MYSELF SUCH FEELINGS ARE ABSURD.
STEVIE IS ONE OF THE NICEST WOMEN I'VE EVER MET -- YET THE FEELINGS... REMAIN.
HIYA, 'RORO. BOY, YOU SHOULD HAVE STUCK AROUND TO WATCH THE CLASS. IT WAS GREAT!
OUR KITTEN HAS REAL TALENT, ORORO -- ONCE WE SMOOTH DOWN HER CONSIDERABLE ROUGH EDGES.
"OUR" KITTEN?
CAN I INTEREST YOU BOTH IN A BITE TO EAT? AFTER A DAY TEACHING BUDDING BARYSHNIKOV'S AND MAKAROVA'S, I'M FAMISHED.
THANK YOU, STEVIE, BUT NO. WE MUST BE GETTING BACK TO THE SCHOOL.
SORRY, STEVIE. DUTY CALLS! SEEYA!
SOME OTHER TIME, PERHAPS.
FOR SURE!
KITTY!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, FLAUNTING YOUR POWER LIKE THAT?! SUPPOSE SOMEONE SEES YOU?!
I CHECKED BEFORE I DID IT, ORORO. NOBODY'S AROUND.
I'M SORRY. IT'S JUST THAT... USING MY POWER -- WALKING THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS -- IS FUN!
I KNOW, LITTLE ONE. BUT PLEASE BE MORE CAREFUL.
OKAY. ORORO, ARE YOU FEELING ALL RIGHT? YOU'RE ON AN AWFULLY SHORT FUSE ALL OF A SUDDEN. IS IT ME, OR...?
GODDESS, THE CHILD IS PERCEPTIVE!
N-NO, KITTEN. IT'S NOT YOU.
I'M, ah, CONCERNED FOR WOLVERINE AND NIGHTCRAWLER. WE'VE HEARD NOTHING FROM THEM SINCE THEY LEFT FOR CANADA THIS MORNING. I HOPE THEY HAVEN'T RUN INTO TROUBLE.
TO FIND OUT...

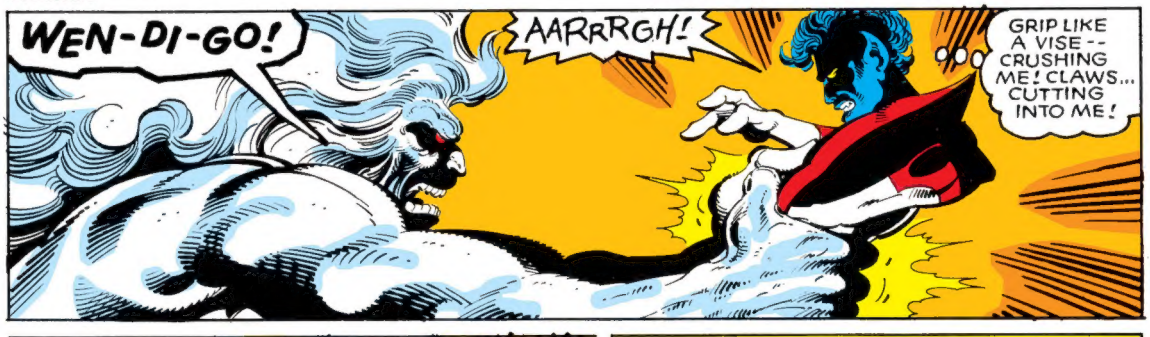
...LET'S TURN OUR ATTENTION AHEAD A FEW HOURS AND NORTH A THOUSAND MILES, FROM SALEM CENTER TO THE SHORES OF HUDSON BAY--
--AND LET THE SITUATION SPEAK FOR ITSELF!
WEN-DI-GO!
YIKES!
THAT WAS TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT!
THIS BEASTIE MAKES THE JUGGERNAUT LOOK PUNY BY COMPARISON. WHICH IS, I THINK, MY CUE TO LET DISCRETION PROVE THE BETTER PART OF VALOR--


--AND GET THE BLAZES OUT OF HERE!
TYPICAL. WOLVERINE DECIDES TO RETURN TO CANADA TO PERSUADE THE GOVERNMENT TO ACCEPT HIS RESIGNATION FROM THEIR SECRET SERVICE, AND TO MAKE PEACE BETWEEN THE X-MEN AND HIS FORMER COLLEAGUES IN ALPHA FLIGHT, CANADA'S OFFICIAL SUPER-HERO TEAM.
WOLVERINE ASKS ME ALONG AS CHAPERONE, TO KEEP HIM OUT OF TROUBLE...
... AND, IDIOT THAT I AM, I ACCEPT.

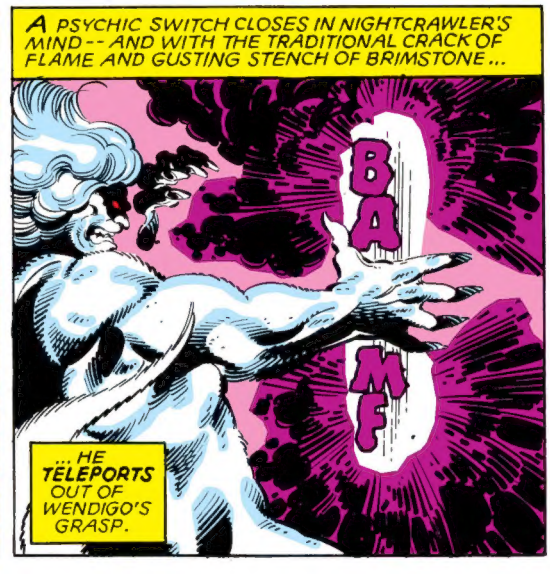
SO, OF COURSE, WITH ALL EYES ON WOLVERINE, THE PROVERBIAL ROOF FALLS IN ON ME!
I'M NOT STAYING AHEAD OF THE MONSTER ON THE GROUND.
IT'S TOO RISKY TO TELEPORT UNLESS I ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO. PERHAPS I'LL HAVE BETTER LUCK IN THE TREETOPS. HE LOOKS TOO BULKY TO CLIMB AFTER ME.

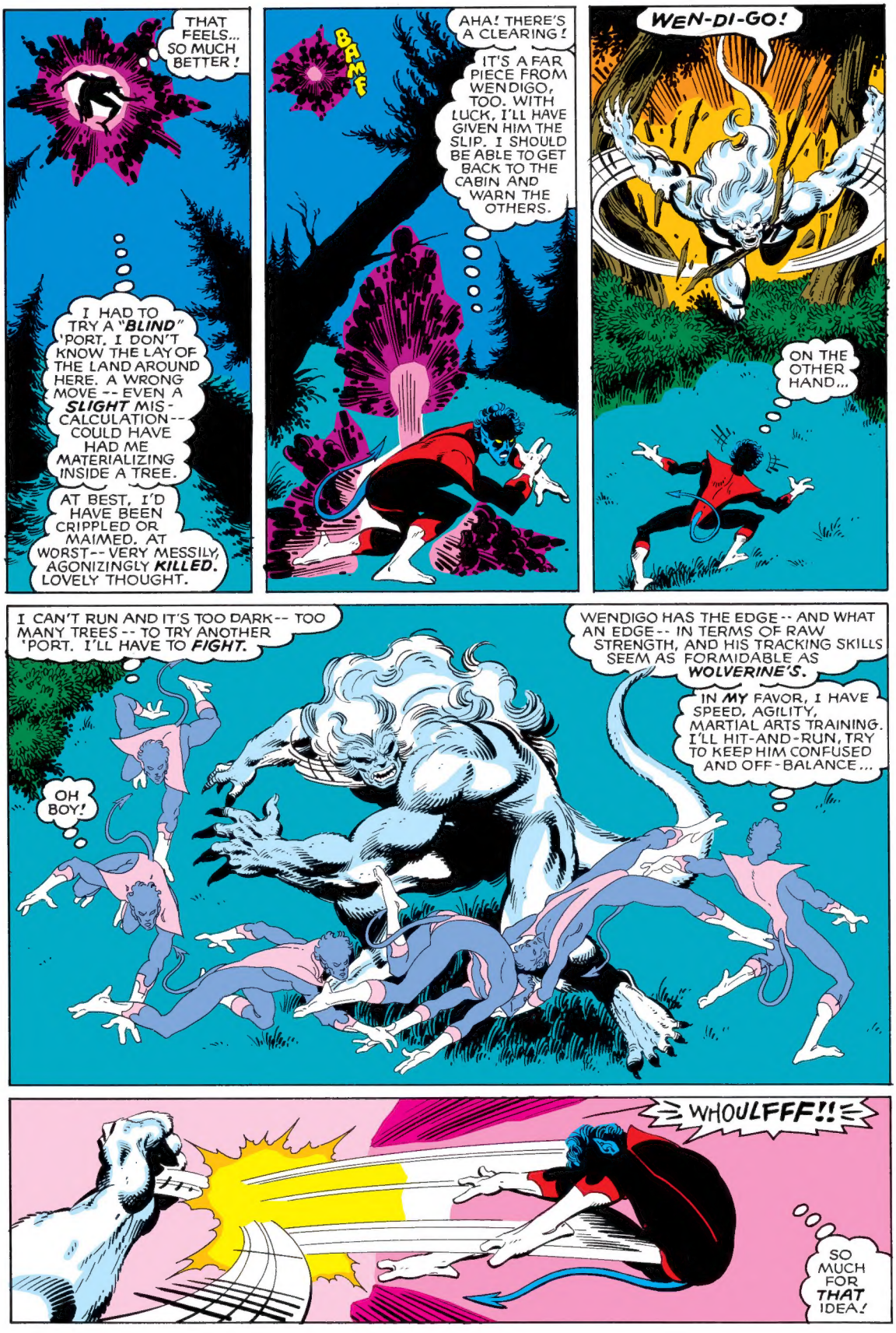
WOLVERINE AND I FOUND HALF OF ALPHA FLIGHT--VINDICATOR, SHAMAN AND SNOWBIRD--UP HERE INVESTIGATING A SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS, HORRIBLE MURDERS AND DISAPPEARANCES.
WOLVERINE IDENTIFIED THEIR QUARRY AS A LEGENDARY WOODS-BEAST NAMED THE WENDIGO.

FROM THIS HULK'S BATTLE CRY, HE MUST BE IT!
MY TREE--OH, NO!
SHAK!

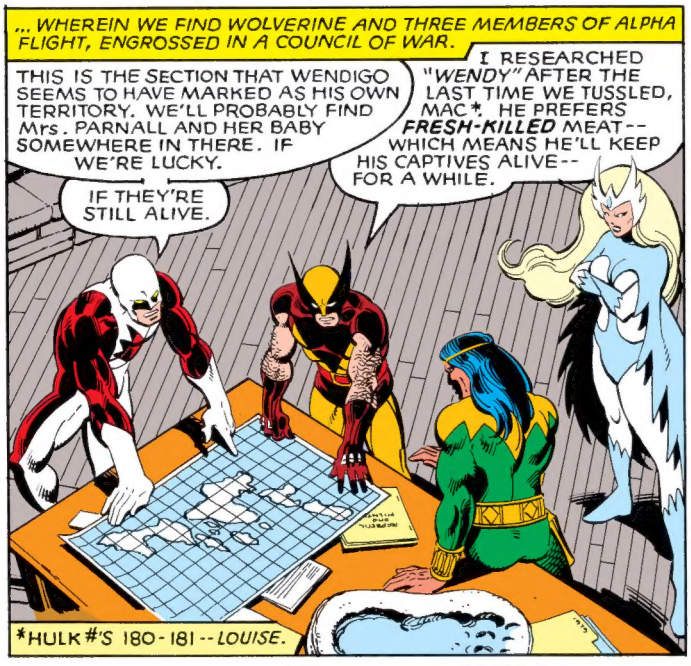

WEN-DI-GO!
AARRRGH!
GRIP LIKE A VISE--CRUSHING ME! CLAWS... CUTTING INTO ME!

WENDIGO... TOO STRONG. I CAN'T... BREAK FREE.
ONLY HOPE... FOCUS CONCENTRATION... IGNORE PAIN... BUT IT'S SO HARD! I HURT... SO MUCH! BUT--I MUST!

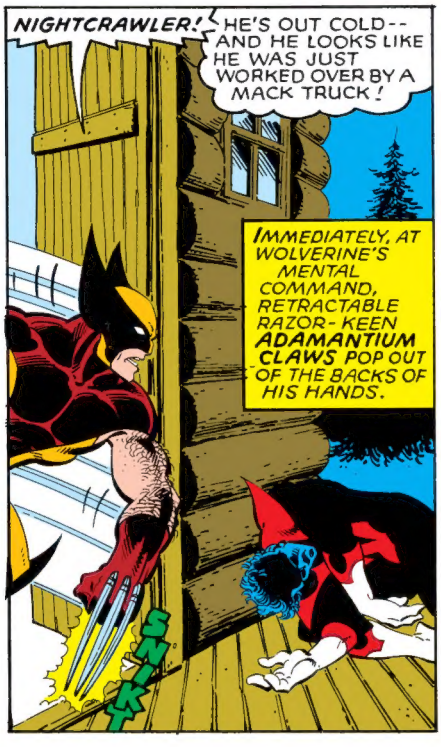

A PSYCHIC SWITCH CLOSES IN NIGHTCRAWLER'S MIND--AND WITH THE TRADITIONAL CRACK OF FLAME AND GUSTING STENCH OF BRIMSTONE...
BAMF
... HE TELEPORTS OUT OF WENDIGO'S GRASP.


THAT FEELS... SO MUCH BETTER!
I HAD TO TRY A "BLIND" 'PORT. I DON'T KNOW THE LAY OF THE LAND AROUND HERE. A WRONG MOVE -- EVEN A SLIGHT MIS-CALCULATION -- COULD HAVE HAD ME MATERIALIZING INSIDE A TREE.
AT BEST, I'D HAVE BEEN CRIPPLED OR MAIMED. AT WORST -- VERY MESSILY, AGONIZINGLY KILLED. LOVELY THOUGHT.
BAME
AHA! THERE'S A CLEARING!
IT'S A FAR PIECE FROM WENDIGO, TOO. WITH LUCK, I'LL HAVE GIVEN HIM THE SLIP. I SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET BACK TO THE CABIN AND WARN THE OTHERS.
WEN-DI-GO!
ON THE OTHER HAND...
I CAN'T RUN AND IT'S TOO DARK -- TOO MANY TREES -- TO TRY ANOTHER 'PORT. I'LL HAVE TO FIGHT.
OH BOY!
WENDIGO HAS THE EDGE -- AND WHAT AN EDGE -- IN TERMS OF RAW STRENGTH, AND HIS TRACKING SKILLS SEEM AS FORMIDABLE AS WOLVERINE'S.
IN MY FAVOR, I HAVE SPEED, AGILITY, MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING. I'LL HIT-AND-RUN, TRY TO KEEP HIM CONFUSED AND OFF-BALANCE...
WHOULFFF!!
SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA!

HE TAKES OFF LIKE A CANNONBALL, CONSCIOUSNESS QUICKLY SLIPPING AWAY AS THE FORCE OF WENDIGO'S PUNCH HURLS HIM OUT OF THE FOREST...
...AND TOWARDS THE CABIN...

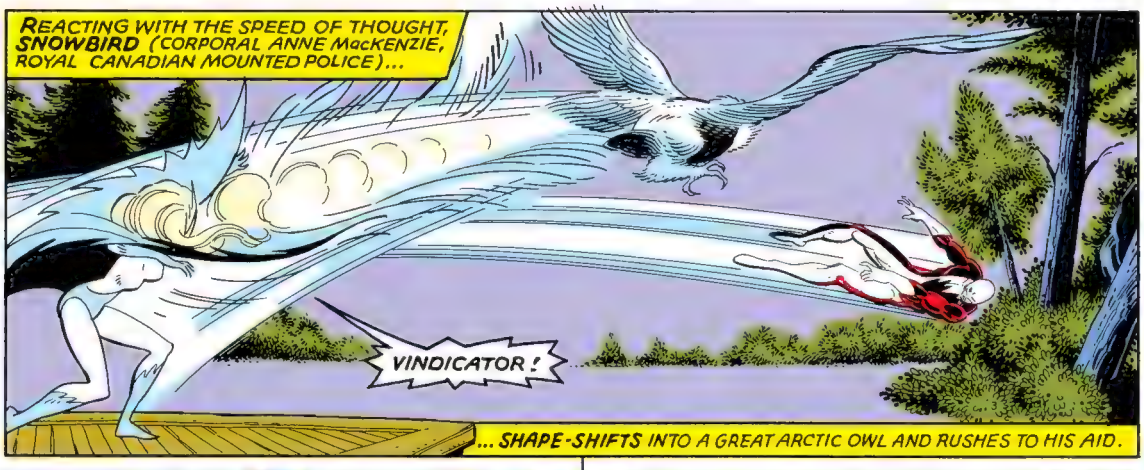

...WHEREIN WE FIND WOLVERINE AND THREE MEMBERS OF ALPHA FLIGHT, ENGROSSED IN A COUNCIL OF WAR.
THIS IS THE SECTION THAT WENDIGO SEEMS TO HAVE MARKED AS HIS OWN TERRITORY. WE'LL PROBABLY FIND Mrs. PARNALL AND HER BABY SOMEWHERE IN THERE. IF WE'RE LUCKY.
IF THEY'RE STILL ALIVE.
I RESEARCHED "WENDY" AFTER THE LAST TIME WE TUSSLED, MAC*. HE PREFERS FRESH-KILLED MEAT-- WHICH MEANS HE'LL KEEP HIS CAPTIVES ALIVE-- FOR A WHILE.
*HULK #'S 180-181 -- LOUISE.

THAT DOESN'T GIVE US--OR Mrs. PARNALL--THE BEST ODDS IN THE WORLD, BUT IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHIN'.
I'LL START HUNTING AT FIRST LIGHT.
WHAT THE--?!
THAT SOUND--!
THWUMP!


NIGHTCRAWLER!
HE'S OUT COLD-- AND HE LOOKS LIKE HE WAS JUST WORKED OVER BY A MACK TRUCK!
IMMEDIATELY, AT WOLVERINE'S MENTAL COMMAND, RETRACTABLE RAZOR-KEEN ADAMANTIUM CLAWS POP OUT OF THE BACKS OF HIS HANDS.
SNIKT

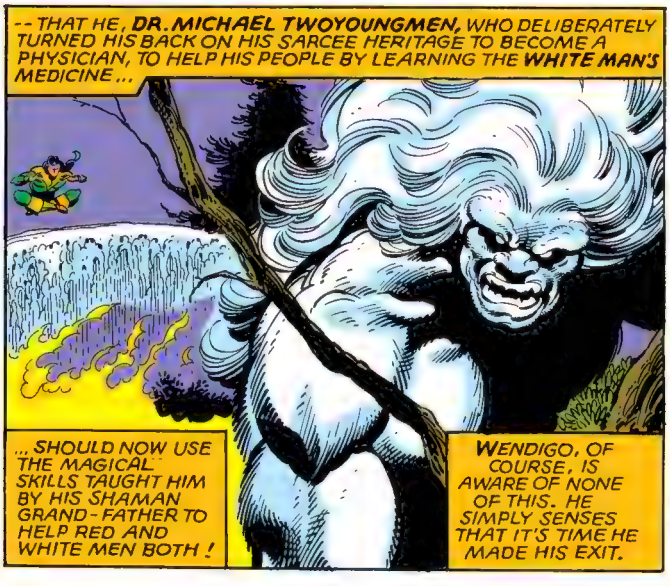
THEY'RE FORGED OF THE STRONGEST METAL KNOWN TO MAN AND ARE CAPABLE OF CUTTING SOLID STEEL AS EASILY AS PAPER.
TONIGHT, THIS SHORTEST, FEISTIEST X-MAN IS GOING TO NEED THEM.
MAC, I GOT THE FEELIN' THAT FINDING WENDIGO HAS JUST BECOME THE LEAST OF OUR PROBLEMS.
WEN-DI-GO!
GOOD GRIEF! HE'S HEFTING THAT PICK-UP LIKE IT WAS A TOY!

FAN OUT, PEOPLE! I'LL HANDLE THIS
FOR MONTHS, I'VE BEEN TELLING MYSELF HOW GOOD MY BATTLE SUIT WAS.
NOW COMES THE ACID TEST!
LORD, HELP ME. I'M... SCARED. I NEVER REALIZED WENDIGO WOULD BE SO-- BIG!
FOR ALL HIS UNSPOKEN FEAR, JAMES MacDONALD HUDSON--
--VINDICATOR, FOUNDER AND LEADER OF ALPHA FLIGHT--STANDS HIS GROUND WITHOUT FLINCHING--
SPLOW!
... AND MEETS WENDIGO'S ATTACK WITH HIS SUIT'S BUILT-IN ENERGY BLASTERS LIKE A SUPER-HERO BORN!
BUT, WITH SURPRISING SPEED AND EVEN MORE SURPRISING -- ALMOST HUMAN -- CUNNING, WENDIGO GRABS FOR A NEARBY FIR TREE...
... AND DECIDES TO INDULGE IN SOME IMPROMPTU BATTING PRACTICE!
UNNNFFF!
SKRAM!
WEN-DI-GO!


REACTING WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT, SNOWBIRD (CORPORAL ANNE MacKENZIE, ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE)...
VINDICATOR!
... SHAPE-SHIFTS INTO A GREAT ARCTIC OWL AND RUSHES TO HIS AID.

HE'LL BE OKAY. MAC DESIGNED HIS BATTLE-SUIT TO PROTECT HIM FROM MY CLAWS. EVEN A ROUGH LANDING IN THOSE TREES SHOULDN'T DO MORE'N SHAKE HIM UP.
WENDIGO'S BEEN CONSIDERATE ENOUGH TO COME TO US, SHAMAN. LET'S FINISH OUR JOB RIGHT HERE 'N' NOW.
YOU GO AFTER HIM, WOLVERINE. I'LL FOLLOW WHEN I CAN.
HUH?!

THE EXPLOSION OF THE TRUCK'S FUEL HAS STARTED A FIRE. THESE WOODS ARE TINDER DRY. IF THIS BLAZE GETS OUT OF CONTROL, IT WILL BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP!
SO SAYING, SHAMAN SCATTERS A HANDFUL OF SACRED POWDER ACROSS THE FACE OF THE FIRE, CREATING A WALL OF ICE TO SMOTHER IT. AND WHILE HE ACTS, HE LAUGHS INSIDE AT THE IRONY OF THE SITUATION --

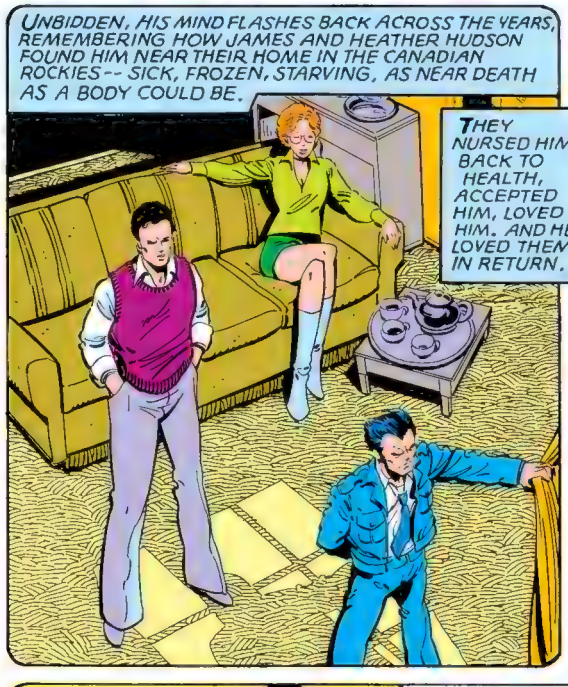

-- THAT HE, DR. MICHAEL TWOYOUNGMEN, WHO DELIBERATELY TURNED HIS BACK ON HIS SARCEE HERITAGE TO BECOME A PHYSICIAN, TO HELP HIS PEOPLE BY LEARNING THE WHITE MAN'S MEDICINE...
... SHOULD NOW USE THE MAGICAL SKILLS TAUGHT HIM BY HIS SHAMAN GRAND-FATHER TO HELP RED AND WHITE MEN BOTH!
WENDIGO, OF COURSE, IS AWARE OF NONE OF THIS. HE SIMPLY SENSES THAT IT'S TIME HE MADE HIS EXIT.

VINDICATOR -- JAMIE, ARE YOU --?!
I'M FINE, SNOWBIRD. THE ONLY THING HURT WAS MY PRIDE.
TAKE WOLVERINE AND FOLLOW THE WENDIGO.
SHAMAN AND I WILL BE ALONG AS SOON AS WE'VE EXTINGUISHED THE FIRE.

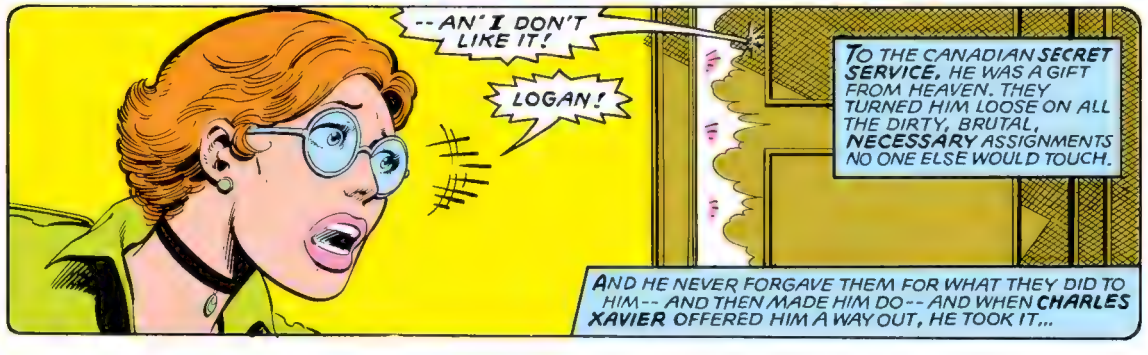
THAT SUCKER AIN'T AS DUMB AS HE LOOKS -- OR AS HE USED TO BE. IN THE OLD DAYS, WENDIGO WOULD GENERALLY LEAVE A HULK-SIZED TRAIL BEHIND HIM.
NOW, HE'S MOVIN' THROUGH THE FOREST LIKE HE WAS A PART OF IT.
AN' HE'S DOIN' A PRETTY GOOD JOB O' COVERIN' HIS TRACKS.

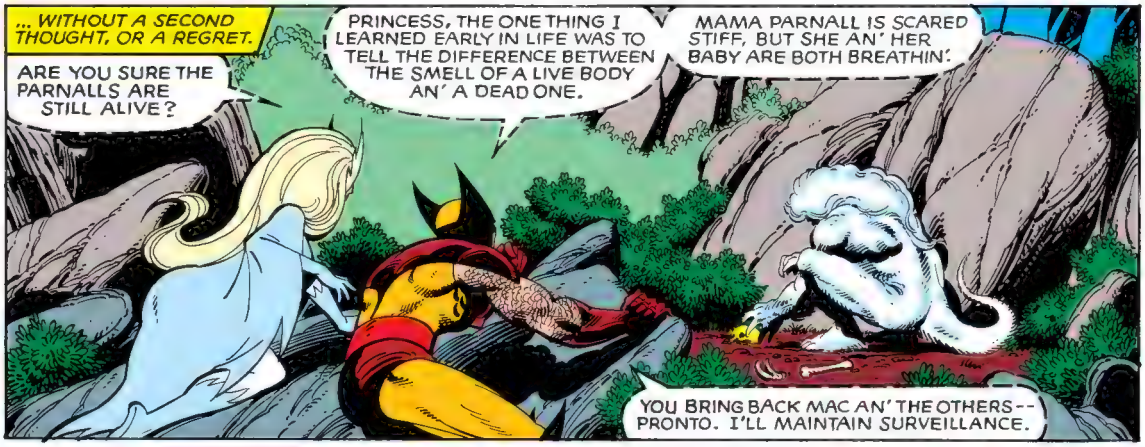
WOLVERINE, I CAN SEE NOTHING FROM THE AIR.
AIN'T SURPRISIN'. THE WOODS HERE-'BOUTS ARE AS THICK AS THEY CAN GET, AN' THERE ARE LOTS OF GULLIES AN' RAVINES FOR WENDY TO HIDE IN.

WE'RE GONNA HAVE'TA DO THIS THE HARD WAY, ON FOOT AN' ONE STEP AT A TIME.
WOLVERINE, I DO NOT LIKE YOU MUCH...
THANKS.
...BUT I CANNOT DENY THAT YOU ARE A GOOD LEADER. WHY DID YOU RESIGN FROM DEPARTMENT H?
I GOT A BETTER OFFER.


UNBIDDEN, HIS MIND FLASHES BACK ACROSS THE YEARS, REMEMBERING HOW JAMES AND HEATHER HUDSON FOUND HIM NEAR THEIR HOME IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES -- SICK, FROZEN, STARVING, AS NEAR DEATH AS A BODY COULD BE.
THEY NURSED HIM BACK TO HEALTH, ACCEPTED HIM, LOVED HIM. AND HE LOVED THEM IN RETURN.

BUT, STILL, THERE WERE STRAINS.
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, MAC. YOU'VE NEVER UNDERSTOOD! I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A DANGEROUS MAN -- SCRAPPIN'S SECOND NATURE TO ME.
BUT THESE CLAWS -- THIS FLAMIN' ADAMANTIUM SKELETON I'VE GOT -- CHANGE EV'RYTHING!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A FAIR FIGHT ANYMORE. I'M VIRTUALLY INVULNERABLE, MAC! I'VE BEEN TURNED INTO A KILLING MACHINE --


-- AN' I DON'T LIKE IT!
LOGAN!
TO THE CANADIAN SECRET SERVICE, HE WAS A GIFT FROM HEAVEN. THEY TURNED HIM LOOSE ON ALL THE DIRTY, BRUTAL, NECESSARY ASSIGNMENTS NO ONE ELSE WOULD TOUCH.
AND HE NEVER FORGAVE THEM FOR WHAT THEY DID TO HIM -- AND THEN MADE HIM DO -- AND WHEN CHARLES XAVIER OFFERED HIM A WAY OUT, HE TOOK IT...


... WITHOUT A SECOND THOUGHT, OR A REGRET.
ARE YOU SURE THE PARNALLS ARE STILL ALIVE?
PRINCESS, THE ONE THING I LEARNED EARLY IN LIFE WAS TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SMELL OF A LIVE BODY AN' A DEAD ONE.
MAMA PARNALL IS SCARED STIFF, BUT SHE AN' HER BABY ARE BOTH BREATHIN'.
YOU BRING BACK MAC AN' THE OTHERS -- PRONTO. I'LL MAINTAIN SURVEILLANCE.

WHY SHOULD I GO?
BECAUSE I CAN'T FLY, DUMMY. AN' SPEED IS WHAT'S IMPORTANT. NOW SCOOT!

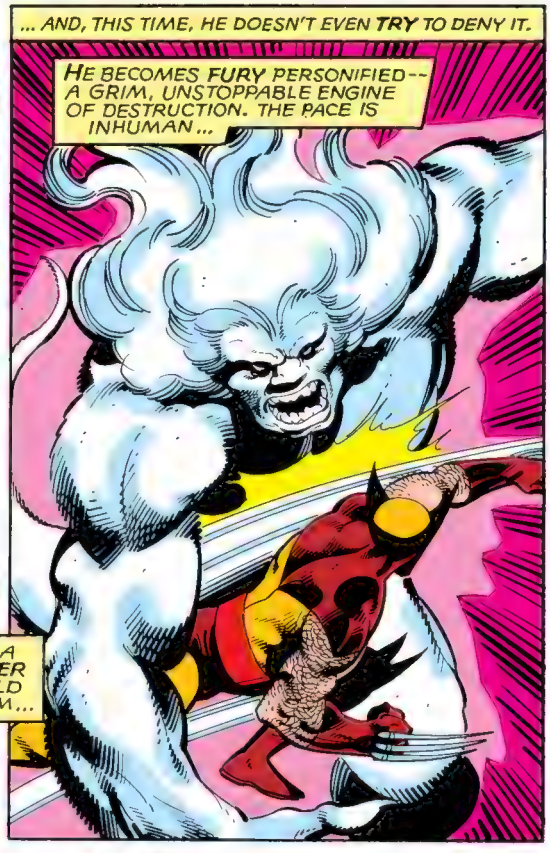
Uh-oh.
WENDY'S ACTIN' HUNGRY -- AN' I HAVE A HUNCH HE'S IN THE MOOD FOR SOMETHIN' MORE SUBSTANTIAL THAN DRIED-UP OLD BONES.
THE BOULDER BLOCKING THE SMALL CAVE WEIGHS A COUPLE OF TONS...

...YET WENDIGO ROLLS IT ASIDE WITH RIDICULOUS EASE, TO REVEAL...
OH, NO!

THE REENFORCEMENTS AIN'T GONNA ARRIVE IN TIME. IF Mrs. PARNALL'S GONNA BE RESCUED, I'LL HAVETA DO THE JOB MYSELF. AN' THAT SUITS ME FINE.
I'VE BEEN ACHIN' FER A REMATCH WITH THE WENDIGO.

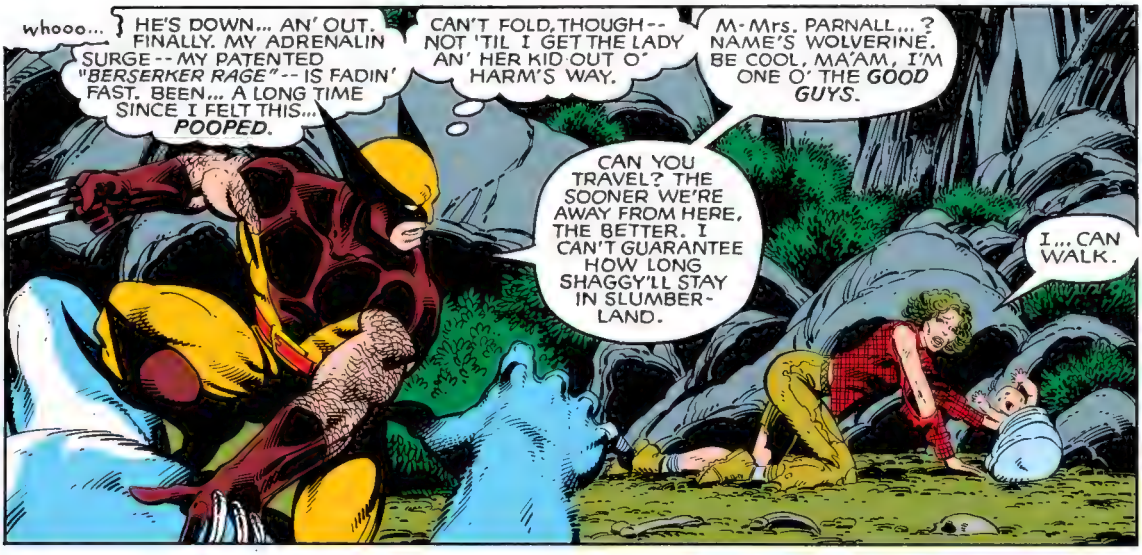
IT LOOKS LIKE -- THIS IS IT!
NNOOOOOOOO.

REMEMBER ME, BUB?
WOLVERINE'S THE NAME, MAYHEM'S THE GAME!
HE FEELS A BERSERKER RAGE BUILD WITHIN HIM...


... AND, THIS TIME, HE DOESN'T EVEN TRY TO DENY IT.
HE BECOMES FURY PERSONIFIED-- A GRIM, UNSTOPPABLE ENGINE OF DESTRUCTION. THE PACE IS INHUMAN...

... THE EQUIVALENT OF DAYS OF NON-STOP COMBAT COMPRESSED INTO A MATTER OF MINUTES. AND THROUGH IT ALL, WOLVERINE DENIES PAIN, DENIES FATIGUE, DENIES EVERYTHING BUT THE WILL TO WIN.
WENDY'S REELING! I'VE GOT HIM ON THE ROPES!
I'LL SETTLE FOR THAT. AS IF I REALLY HAD A CHOICE.

ANY OTHER FOE WOULD HAVE BEEN SMASHED TO A PULP OR CUT INTO SHISH-KEBAB BY NOW. BUT WENDIGO'S THE NEXT BEST THING TO INVULNERABLE. I CAN HURT HIM-- TEMPORARILY-- AN' STUN HIM, BUT NO MORE THAN THAT, NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY.
AN' I AM TRYIN' REAL HARD!!


whooo...
HE'S DOWN... AN' OUT. FINALLY. MY ADRENALIN SURGE -- MY PATENTED "BERSERKER RAGE" -- IS FADIN' FAST. BEEN... A LONG TIME SINCE I FELT THIS... POOPED.
CAN'T FOLD, THOUGH -- NOT 'TIL I GET THE LADY AN' HER KID OUT O' HARM'S WAY.
M-Mrs. PARNALL...? NAME'S WOLVERINE. BE COOL, MA'AM, I'M ONE O' THE GOOD GUYS.
CAN YOU TRAVEL? THE SOONER WE'RE AWAY FROM HERE, THE BETTER. I CAN'T GUARANTEE HOW LONG SHAGGY'LL STAY IN SLUMBER-LAND.
I... CAN WALK.

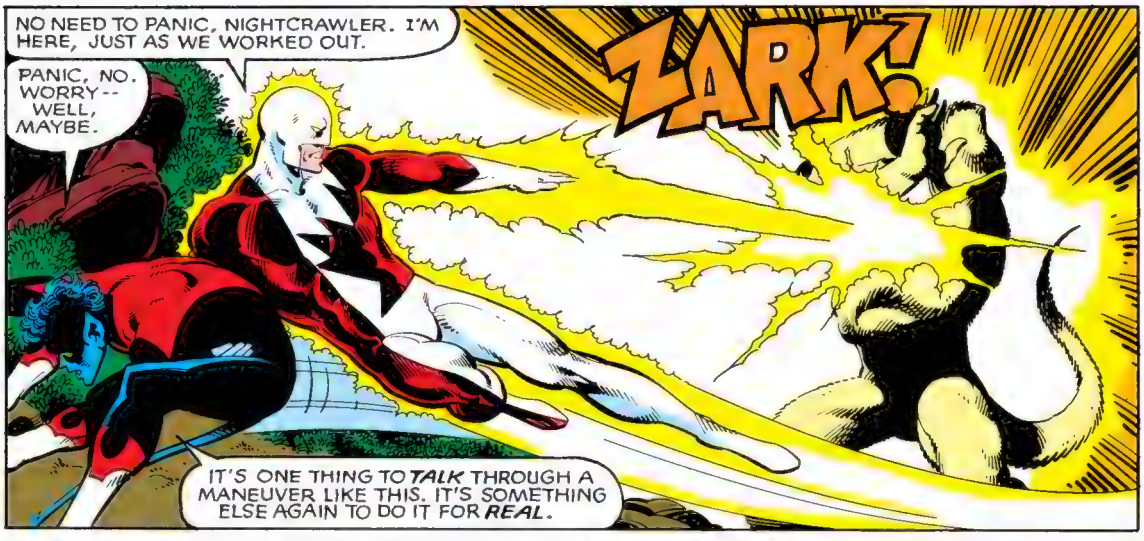
THAT'S A START. WE'LL PICK UP SPEED AS WE GO ALONG, AS YOU GET YOUR STRENGTH BACK.
M-MY HUSBAND, JOE -- I HEARD HIM SCREAM. I... SAW--! IT WAS... HORRIBLE. AND... AND MY BOY, TOMMY...?
TOMMY'S FINE. HE'S IN THE HOSPITAL.
THANK GOD.

THAT'S ONLY PART O' THE TRUTH. BUT HOW DO I TELL HER THAT THE BOY'S IN CATATONIC SHOCK -- ALMOST A KIND OF LIVING DEATH?!
HUH?! THAT SHADOW--!

WHAM!

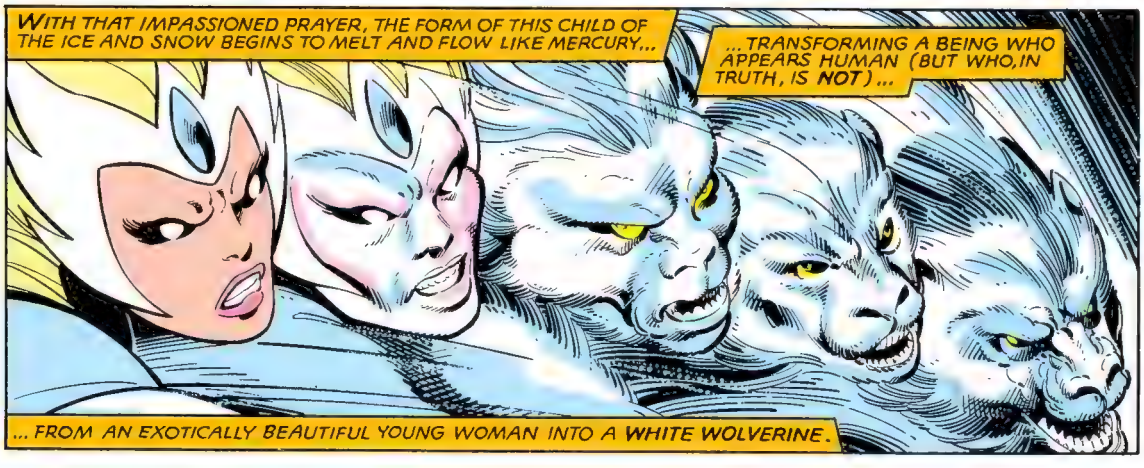
OF ALL... THE DUMB... MISTAKES. I... DROPPED MY GUARD...
WENDY... HAS EDGE. ALL I CAN DO... IS RIDE THINGS OUT...
... AN' HOPE FOR... THE BEST...
WEN-DI-GO!

HOPE, AS THE SAYING GOES, SPRINGS ETERNAL.
WOLVERINE'S UNBREAKABLE ADAMANTIUM SKELETON SAVES HIM FROM INSTANT DEATH...
THOOM
...BUT, EVEN SO, HE ENDURES A FRIGHTENING AMOUNT OF PUNISHMENT AT WENDIGO'S HANDS.
THAT... HURT!
GOTTA MAKE... SOME KIND'A MOVE. CAN'T TAKE... MUCH MORE... OF... THIS...
TAKE HEART, MEIN KLEIN FREUND! THE CAVALRY HAS ARRIVED!
AND IN THE PROVERBIAL NICK OF TIME, TOO. WOLVERINE LOOKS IN A BAD WAY.
NIGHTCRAWLER TELEPORTS TO THE ATTACK AND...
HERE, MONSTER! THIS IS FOR THE POUNDING YOU GAVE ME EARLIER TONIGHT!
KRAK!
NICE TRY, WENDIGO, BUT NO KEWPIE DOLL!
I LEARNED THE HARD WAY HOW FAST YOU MOVED. YOU'LL HAVE TO DO A LOT BETTER THAN THIS TO CATCH ME NOW!
VINDICATOR!


NO NEED TO PANIC, NIGHTCRAWLER. I'M HERE, JUST AS WE WORKED OUT.
PANIC, NO. WORRY-- WELL, MAYBE.
ZARK!
IT'S ONE THING TO TALK THROUGH A MANEUVER LIKE THIS. IT'S SOMETHING ELSE AGAIN TO DO IT FOR REAL.

I WAS AFRAID OF THIS. WE'RE STAGGERING WENDIGO, BUT NO MORE THAN THAT. THE ENCHANTMENT THAT CREATED HIM PROTECTS HIM FROM THE FULL FORCE OF OUR POWERS.
HE'S TOO STRONG. MY MAGICK CAN'T EVEN BIND HIM-- MUCH LESS CURE HIM-- WHILE HE'S CONSCIOUS.
PHYSICAL FORCE CAN OVERWHELM HIM. THE HULK AND WOLVERINE PROVED THAT.
WOLVERINE'S OUT COLD, SNOWBIRD. AND THE HULK ISN'T AVAILABLE.
TRUE

... BUT PERHAPS I CAN SHAPE-CHANGE INTO THE NEXT BEST THING.
THERE IS GREAT DANGER IN THIS. I ASSUME THE PERSONA OF WHATEVER CREATURE I BECOME. IF I AM CONSUMED BY BLOOD-LUST, I COULD BECOME AS TERRIBLE A THREAT TO MY FRIENDS AS WENDIGO HIMSELF. BUT I CAN SEE NO ALTERNATIVE. THE RISK MUST BE TAKEN.
OH, HODIAK-- SPIRIT OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS-- GRANDFATHER--HELP ME! GIVE ME STRENGTH!


WITH THAT IMPASSIONED PRAYER, THE FORM OF THIS CHILD OF THE ICE AND SNOW BEGINS TO MELT AND FLOW LIKE MERCURY...
...TRANSFORMING A BEING WHO APPEARS HUMAN (BUT WHO, IN TRUTH, IS NOT)...
... FROM AN EXOTICALLY BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN INTO A WHITE WOLVERINE.

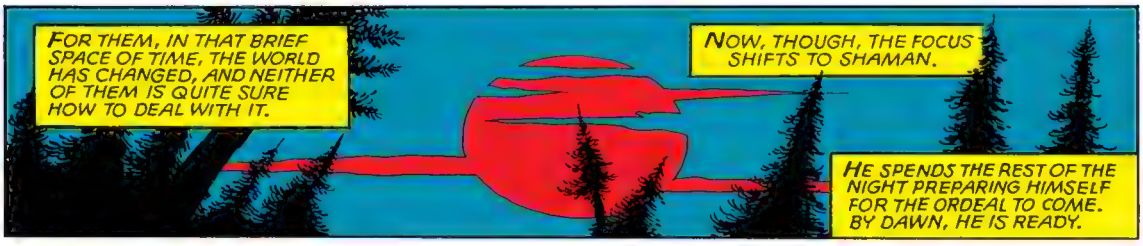
GRAM FOR GRAM, IT IS SAID THAT NO ANIMAL ON EARTH MATCHES A WOLVERINE'S FEROCITY OR INDOMITABLE WILL. LOGAN--THE X-MAN, WOLVERINE--IS THE CLOSEST AVATAR OF THIS SMALL, INCREDIBLY DEADLY WOODSBEAST.
RRAWR!
BUT SNOWBIRD HAS BECOME THE REAL THING--AND BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM, THERE IS NO COMPARISON.
WHAT FOLLOWS IS NOT SO MUCH A BATTLE AS A CLASH OF PRIMAL FORCES. A DUEL OF FANG AND CLAW, MUSCLE AND SINEW.
IT IS NOT PRETTY.
AND IT IS SOMETHING THAT ALL PRESENT WILL NEVER FORGET.
ANNIE...
...WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
WHEN IT IS OVER, WENDIGO LIES UNCONSCIOUS, THE DARKLING SPELL THAT CREATED HIM ALREADY HEALING HIS FEARSOME WOUNDS. IN A MATTER OF HOURS, HE WILL BE AS GOOD AS NEW. BUT, BY THEN, SHAMAN WILL HAVE HAD A CHANCE TO CAST HIS COUNTERSPELL.
HE STEPS FORWARD, ONLY TO FREEZE IN HIS TRACKS AS THE SNOWBIRD/WOLVERINE BARES HER TEETH AND WARNS HIM AWAY FROM HER PREY.
RRRR!

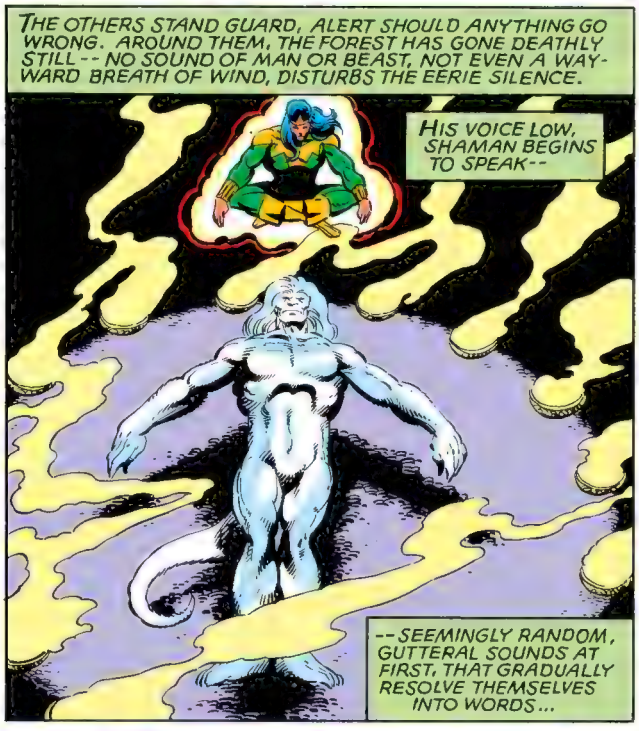
SHE'S STILL A WOLVERINE! THE ANIMAL-PERSONA MUST HAVE TAKEN OVER!
MY CHANGELING SPELL WILL WORK AS WELL ON SNOWBIRD AS ON WENDIGO...
NO! SHE'LL FIGHT YOU, PHYSICALLY AND PSYCHICALLY. YOU COULD BE LEFT SO WASTED YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO HELP WENDIGO, AN' THEN ALL THIS PAIN AN' GRIEF WOULD HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING.
LEAVE ANNIE TO ME.
GRRR!

NO VIOLENCE. NO FEAR. I'VE GOTTA REACH ANNIE WITH WORDS-- AN' EMOTIONS-- JUST LIKE SCOTT REACHED JEAN GREY WHEN SHE'D BEEN CONSUMED BY DARK PHOENIX.*
*SEE X-MEN #136 -- LOUISE.
I AIN'T GOOD AT TALKIN'. EVERY INSTINCT IN ME WANTS TO FIGHT HER, TO PROVE MY OWN STRENGTH AN' SUPERIORITY BY SMASHIN' HER INTO SUBMISSION.
BUT THAT'S THE WRONG WAY. I CAN'T -- I WON'T DO THAT.
ANNIE, IT'S LOGAN.
HEAR ME, PRINCESS. LISTEN TO ME. REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU WERE...

HE ISN'T AWARE OF HOW LONG HE TALKS, OR INDEED OF PRECISELY WHAT HE SAYS. IN A SENSE, HE BARES HIS SOUL TO HER, REACHING OUT WITH AS WILD AND FREE A PASSION AS HER OWN.
BRAWR!
AND THEN, WITH A BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM, THE SNOWBIRD/WOLVERINE RESPONDS.

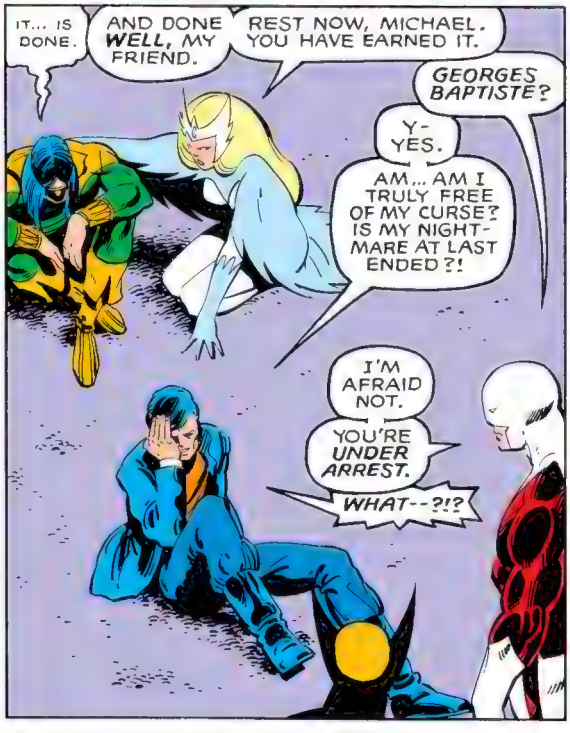
LOGAN... OH, LOGAN...
...THANK YOU...
HUSH, DARLIN', HUSH. I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL. YOU'LL BE OKAY NOW, THOUGH. YOU'VE GONE THROUGH THE VALLEY, FACED THE WORST PARTS OF YOURSELF, AND TRIUMPHED. IT'LL NEVER BE AS ROUGH AGAIN.
THEY MOVE APART FROM THE OTHERS, THEIR WORDS AS PRIVATE AS THE EMOTIONS THEY STRUGGLE TO EXPRESS.

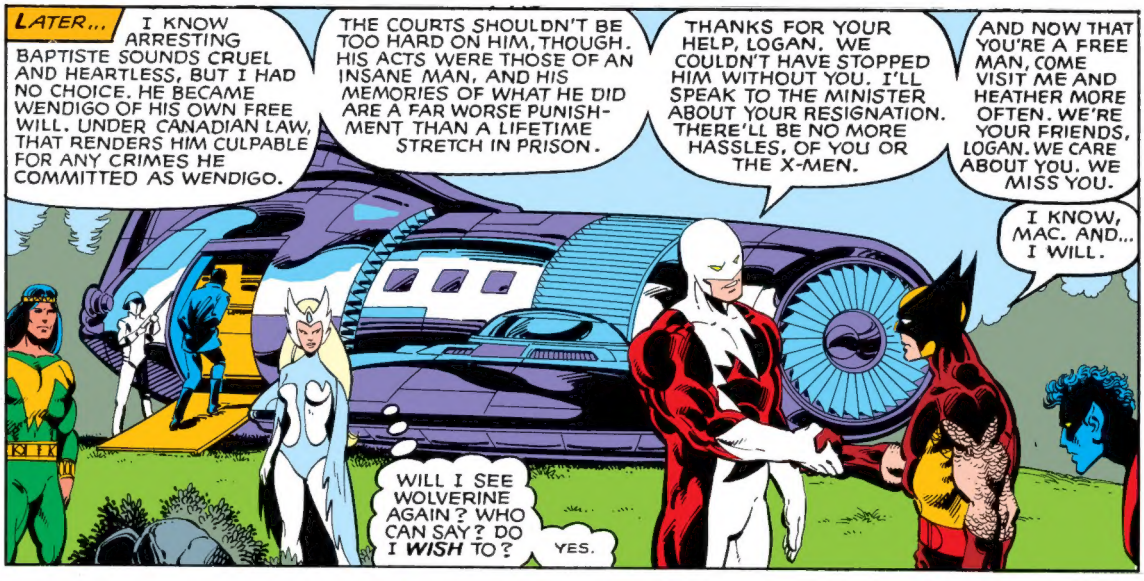

FOR THEM, IN THAT BRIEF SPACE OF TIME, THE WORLD HAS CHANGED, AND NEITHER OF THEM IS QUITE SURE HOW TO DEAL WITH IT.
NOW, THOUGH, THE FOCUS SHIFTS TO SHAMAN.
HE SPENDS THE REST OF THE NIGHT PREPARING HIMSELF FOR THE ORDEAL TO COME. BY DAWN, HE IS READY.

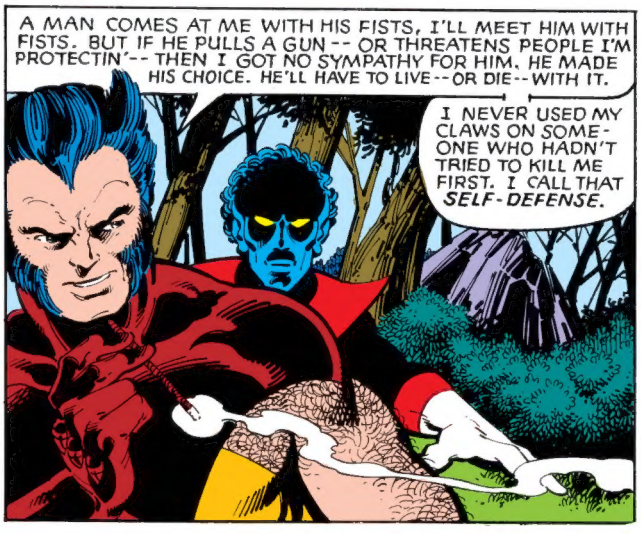

THE OTHERS STAND GUARD, ALERT SHOULD ANYTHING GO WRONG. AROUND THEM, THE FOREST HAS GONE DEATHLY STILL -- NO SOUND OF MAN OR BEAST, NOT EVEN A WAYWARD BREATH OF WIND, DISTURBS THE EERIE SILENCE.
HIS VOICE LOW, SHAMAN BEGINS TO SPEAK--
--SEEMINGLY RANDOM, GUTTERAL SOUNDS AT FIRST, THAT GRADUALLY RESOLVE THEMSELVES INTO WORDS...

...THE WORDS INTO A SING-SONG RHYTHMIC CHANT. THE LANGUAGE IS OLDER THAN RECORDED HISTORY, AND BESIDES SHAMAN, ONLY SNOWBIRD KNOWS THE WORDS' MEANING. ALL, HOWEVER, RESPOND TO THE SPELL AS SHAMAN DRAWS ON THE POWER OF THEIR COMBINED WILL...

...RELEASING IT ON THE ENCHANTED WOODSBEAST.
AND, BEFORE THEIR EYES, MONSTER BECOMES MAN.

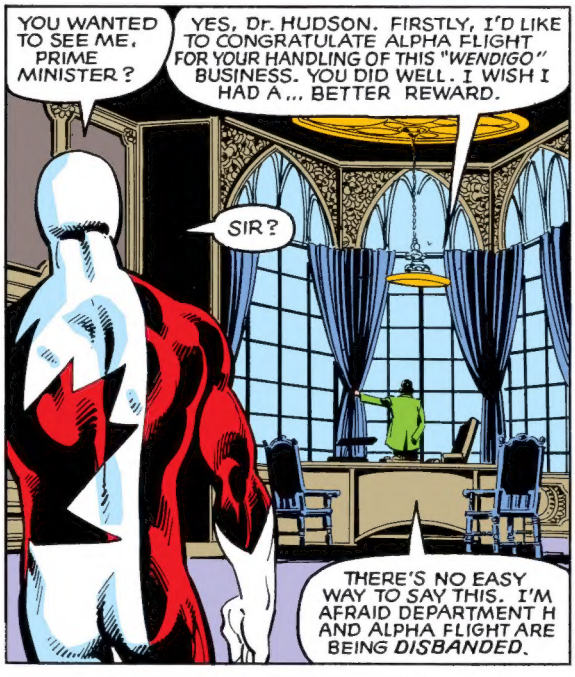

IT... IS DONE.
AND DONE WELL, MY FRIEND.
REST NOW, MICHAEL. YOU HAVE EARNED IT.
GEORGES BAPTISTE?
Y-YES.
AM... AM I TRULY FREE OF MY CURSE? IS MY NIGHTMARE AT LAST ENDED?!
I'M AFRAID NOT.
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.
WHAT--?!?

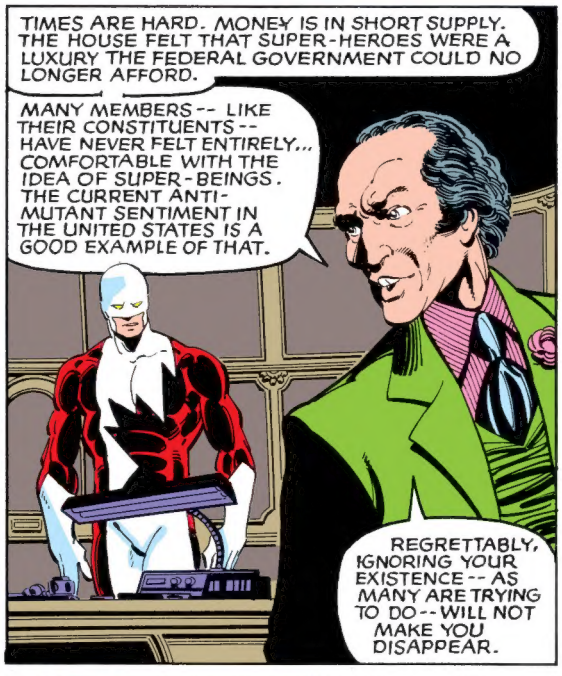


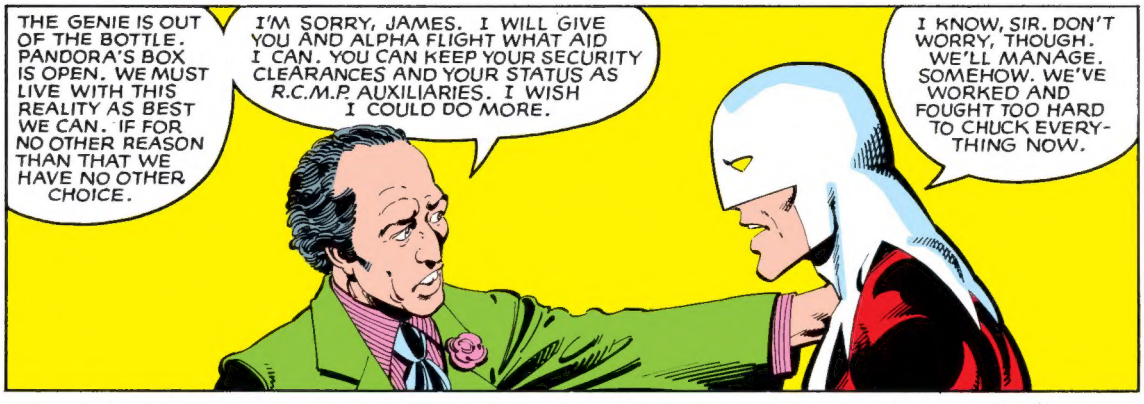


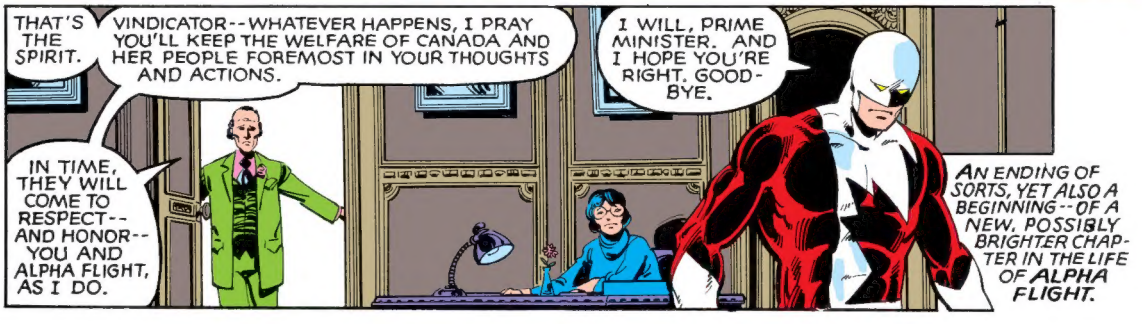
WOLVERINE DOES NOT REPLY AND, FOR A LONG WHILE, THERE IS SILENCE BETWEEN THE TWO MEN...

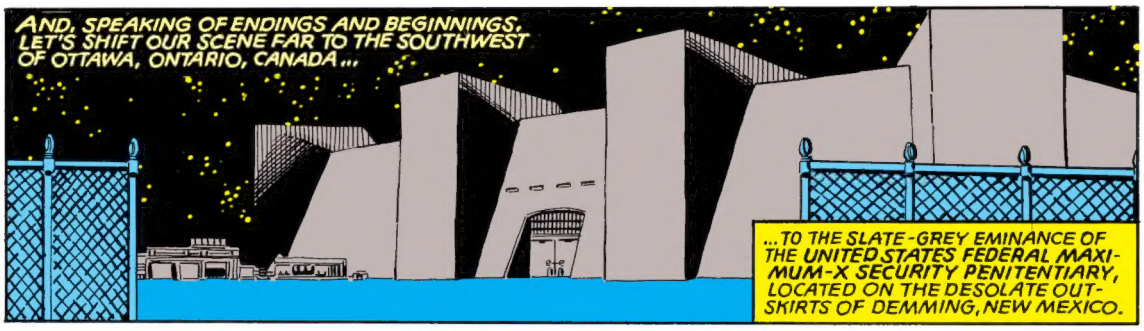
... AND THE FEW TIMES HE DOES SPEAK, DURING THEIR LEISURELY MEANDER -- A VACATION BY ANY OTHER NAME -- HOME, HIS TONE IS THOUGHTFUL. NIGHTCRAWLER'S WORDS -- HIS FINAL QUESTION -- STRUCK DEEP.
NOW -- LIKE IT OR NOT, FOR BETTER OR WORSE -- WOLVERINE MUST DEAL WITH THEM.
MEANWHILE, IN THE PARLIAMENT BUILDING IN OTTAWA ...

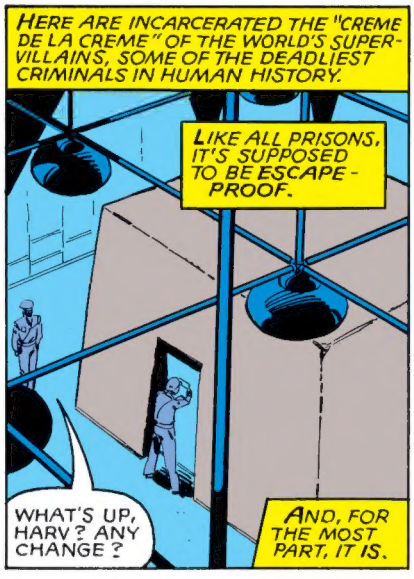

YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, PRIME MINISTER?
YES, Dr. HUDSON. FIRSTLY, I'D LIKE TO CONGRATULATE ALPHA FLIGHT FOR YOUR HANDLING OF THIS "WENDIGO" BUSINESS. YOU DID WELL. I WISH I HAD A ... BETTER REWARD.
SIR?
THERE'S NO EASY WAY TO SAY THIS. I'M AFRAID DEPARTMENT H AND ALPHA FLIGHT ARE BEING DISBANDED.

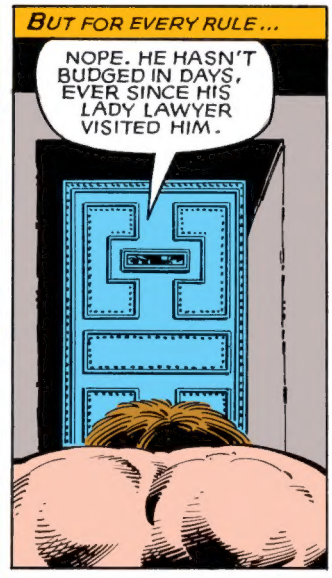

TIMES ARE HARD. MONEY IS IN SHORT SUPPLY. THE HOUSE FELT THAT SUPER-HEROES WERE A LUXURY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD NO LONGER AFFORD.
MANY MEMBERS -- LIKE THEIR CONSTITUENTS -- HAVE NEVER FELT ENTIRELY... COMFORTABLE WITH THE IDEA OF SUPER-BEINGS. THE CURRENT ANTI-MUTANT SENTIMENT IN THE UNITED STATES IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THAT.
REGRETTABLY, IGNORING YOUR EXISTENCE -- AS MANY ARE TRYING TO DO -- WILL NOT MAKE YOU DISAPPEAR.

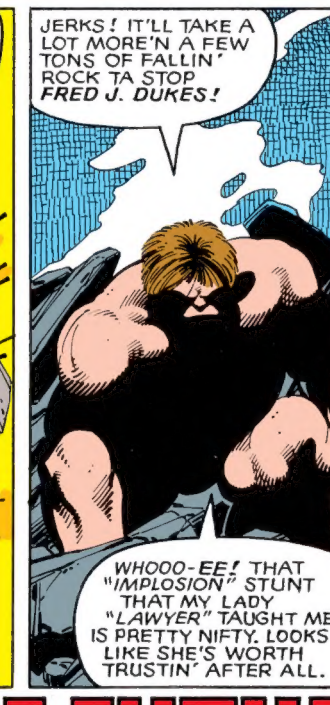

THE GENIE IS OUT OF THE BOTTLE. PANDORA'S BOX IS OPEN. WE MUST LIVE WITH THIS REALITY AS BEST WE CAN. IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THAT WE HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE.
I'M SORRY, JAMES. I WILL GIVE YOU AND ALPHA FLIGHT WHAT AID I CAN. YOU CAN KEEP YOUR SECURITY CLEARANCES AND YOUR STATUS AS R.C.M.P. AUXILIARIES. I WISH I COULD DO MORE.
I KNOW, SIR. DON'T WORRY, THOUGH. WE'LL MANAGE. SOMEHOW. WE'VE WORKED AND FOUGHT TOO HARD TO CHUCK EVERYTHING NOW.

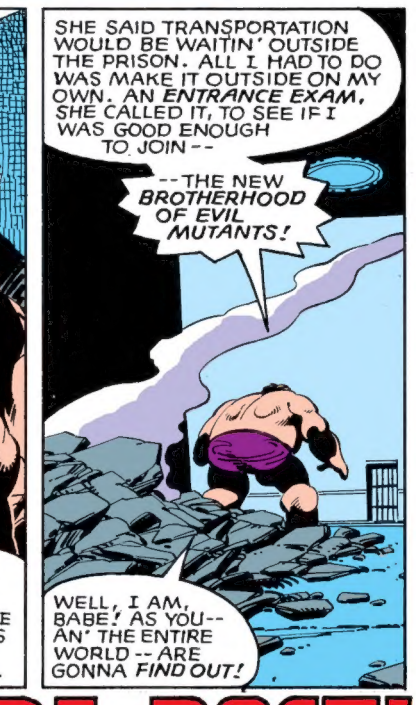

THAT'S THE SPIRIT.
VINDICATOR -- WHATEVER HAPPENS, I PRAY YOU'LL KEEP THE WELFARE OF CANADA AND HER PEOPLE FOREMOST IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS.
I WILL, PRIME MINISTER. AND I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT. GOOD-BYE.
IN TIME, THEY WILL COME TO RESPECT -- AND HONOR -- YOU AND ALPHA FLIGHT, AS I DO.
AN ENDING OF SORTS, YET ALSO A BEGINNING -- OF A NEW, POSSIBLY BRIGHTER CHAPTER IN THE LIFE OF ALPHA FLIGHT.











NEXT

DAYS OF FUTURE, PAST!

MINUTEMEN

Sy13nt
Bob